

What is claimed is:

1. An image forming method for forming an image on a reversible thermo-sensitive recording medium provided with a recording layer containing liquid crystal that exhibits a cholesteric liquid crystal phase, said image forming method comprising:

a first heating process for heating the liquid crystal in a crystal phase to a first temperature that allows the liquid crystal to exhibit a cholesteric liquid crystal phase or an isotropic phase to form an image; and

a second heating process for heating at least a part of an area of the recording medium containing at least a part of an area where the image has been formed to allow at least a part of the image to discolor or develop a color.

2. An image forming method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the image formed in the first heating process is a visible image.

3. An image forming method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the image formed in the first heating process is a latent image.

4. An image forming method as claimed in claim 1, wherein, in the first heating process, the liquid crystal that has been heated to the first temperature is rapidly cooled down.

5. An image forming method as claimed in claim 4, wherein the liquid crystal that has been rapidly cooled down exhibits a glass phase.

6. An image forming method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the liquid crystal that has been heated to the first temperature exhibits a glass phase.

7. An image forming method as claimed in claim 1, wherein, in the second heating process, the liquid crystal that has been heated is rapidly cooled.

8. An image forming method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the liquid crystal that has been rapidly cooled exhibits a glass phase.

9. An image forming method as claimed in claim 1, wherein, in the second heating process, the liquid crystal is heated to at most a second temperature that is lower than the first temperature.

10. An image forming method for forming an image on a reversible thermo-sensitive recording medium provided with a recording layer containing liquid crystal that exhibits a cholesteric liquid crystal phase, said image forming method comprising:

a first process for selectively setting portions of the liquid crystal in a crystal phase and a fixed phase and thus forming an image on the thermo-sensible recording medium; and

a second process for discoloring or developing a color of at least a part of the portion(s) set in the fixed phase thus discoloring or developing a color of at least a part of the image.

11. An image forming method as claimed in claim 10, wherein, in the first process, the liquid crystal is heated to a temperature that allows the liquid crystal to exhibit a cholesteric liquid crystal phase or an isotropic phase to form an image, and then rapidly cooled.

12. An image forming method as claimed in claim 10, wherein, in the second process, the liquid crystal is heated, and then rapidly cooled.